

October 30, 2013

Thank you to the Michigan State Senate for addressing this important legislation, House Bills 4352 and 4353.

My name is Cole Gellatly and I'm 13 years old. I am from Macomb Township and attend Shelby Jr. High School which is a part of Utica Community Schools. I love spending time outdoors, running in local 5K races, and playing travel lacrosse. I am also allergic to peanuts, tree nuts and soy.

Although I am not old enough to vote, I am a direct recipient of the legislation before you today. The legislation will help keep me and my friends safer at school.

My parents learned of my peanut and tree nut allergies when I was 13 months old. From a young age, I learned to ask "is this safe for me?" so I was ready to ask the same question when I entered school. I had my first allergic reaction in school when I was 9 years old. I had a peanut safe hot lunch but we later learned it contained soy. We did not know I was allergic to soy. It was a frightening experience but my teachers knew what to watch for and administered the correct care for my reaction.

Many students may not know they are allergic to food, insect stings or latex. I've learned that in approximately 25% of reactions that occur at school, the student was previously undiagnosed with a food allergy.

Epi Pens save lives and I can tell you this first hand. I had a severe reaction at age 11 to a cookie I had previously had safely. My throat began to itch and then I began to feel it tightened. I had a weird cough that my family had never heard before. My mom gave me the Epi Pen and within 1 minute I felt relief. The Epi Pen saved my life.

It is important to me that stock Epi Pens are available at all public schools across Michigan. The legislation will help students who do not know of their allergies. The legislation will help make sure school staff is trained on Epi Pens. The legislation will help protect school staff who administer the Epi Pen.

Thank you for supporting for this legislation. You will be keeping kids safer and alive at school!

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